

Testimony from Chuck Hersey
SEMCOG Environmental Programs Manager
Before the
House Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use and Environment
Committee
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Good Morning: I'm Chuck Hersey, Manager of Environmental Programs for SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. SEMCOG is a regional planning agency representing 149 local governments in Southeast Michigan. We are the designated Solid Waste Planning Agency for Southeast Michigan under the State's Waste Management Act. We are also designated the Water Quality Management Planning Agency under the Clean Water Act.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to address the committee on this important legislation. It is necessary to permit septage use in a landfill as an additive in a Research, Development and Demonstration Project. There are several reasons this septage management option is important.

1. Failing septic systems and improper disposal of septage are two sources of water quality impairment to Lake St. Clair. The current practice of land application of septage, especially during the winter months with frozen ground conditions, provides an avenue for release of septage to seasonal runoff and potential contamination of groundwater and surface water resources.
2. One prerequisite for achieving clean water is having adequate wastewater infrastructure that serves the needs of current as well as future populations of the state as well as in Southeast Michigan.
3. SEMCOG recently identified the necessity for an additional investment of \$14-\$26 billion over the next 30 years to maintain and improve the region's sewage collection and treatment system.

However, it is too expensive to put sewers everywhere.

4. Therefore, we view septic systems as a critical component of Michigan's wastewater infrastructure. The key to good operation is proper siting and regular maintenance and safe disposal.
5. In the next 25 years, the number of households in Macomb and St. Clair Counties will increase by 33 percent and 39 percent respectively. This will increase the amount of septage generated in the counties that must be managed. Land application will not be viable due to surrounding urbanizing conditions and the potential for water quality degradation. That is why SEMCOG is working with the counties to ensure there will be sufficient capacity to safely handle the increased septage generated in the future.
6. Permitting the use of septage as an additive in St. Clair County's Smiths Creek Landfill bioreactor project to biostabilize the waste volume will help answer questions and evaluate technology for addressing two important environmental challenges:
 - Managing landfill capacity to prolong facility operation, and
 - Providing an environmentally safe and secure facility to receive septage.

A demonstration project will help the state determine if landfills can be a viable long-term option for both managing septage and reducing the number of landfills necessary to meet the state's solid waste management needs.

In summary, this legislation is carefully crafted to allow for demonstration projects with results that will be positive for the environment, promote efficiency in sewer infrastructure and reduce the number of our landfills.

Mr. Chairman we support passage of House Bills 5148 and 5149.